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## VI.—KELTIC AND GERMANIC.

Interest has been awakened of late in the study of the relations existing or supposed to exist between early Norse literature and early Irish. About a year ago A. C. Bang published, in Danish, a monograph on the *Voluspá*,<sup>1</sup> in which he contended that this part of the Edda is not of Germanic origin at all, but is a mere modification of early Jewish-Christian mysticism as embodied in the so-called Sibylline books. Many of the leading Norse scholars in Germany, Sweden and England have already expressed their assent. Objectors are not wanting, but in general we may say that the drift of opinion is in favor of the new interpretation. Its significance is obvious. If adopted in full, it will force us to reconstruct in great part the usual text-book systems of Eddaic mythology. What used to be regarded as the quintessence of Germanic cosmogony, as the most valuable record of primitive heathen belief, becomes now the merest dregs of a spurious Christianity. Yet it must be conceded that Bang's attack is a formidable one; it will not be easy to controvert either his premises or his conclusions. Going over the entire Sibylline literature very carefully, laying bare its growth, and delineating its chief traits, he puts his analysis by the side of the *Voluspá*, and asks if we can help recognizing between the two a vital connection both in form and in spirit. Were it necessary to be a specialist in Norse literature in order to appreciate the comparison, I should refrain from expressing any opinion. But the question is not one of mastering grammatical niceties or subtle mythological conceptions; it is rather an exercise of one's practical ability to recognize literary borrowing. As in the case of two pictures, we do not need to be artists to decide that one has borrowed its *motifs* from the other. Bang's argument can scarcely be met by asserting that the *Voluspá* and the Sibylline books may have had some common source. The Sibylline books are specifically Jewish-Christian, and consequently can not have anything in common with Germanic heathenism; they must have originated and developed themselves in Jewish-Christian communities of the

<sup>1</sup> Translated, with some additions, into German by J. C. Paestion, Vienna.

early Roman empire. There are only two ways of invalidating the new hypothesis: either to deny flatly all resemblance between Voluspá and Sibyl, or to impeach the accuracy of Bang's analysis of the Sibylline literature.

But it is one thing to establish a resemblance; another, to account for it. Just here Bang makes a *salto mortale*, and lands—in Ireland. Referring to Vigfusson's *Sturlunga Saga*, *Prolegomena* (Oxford, 1878), he says: "Keltic Ireland is evidently the intermediary (*Vermittlungsglied*) between the Voluspá and the Sibylline Oracles. The author of the Voluspá must, through contact with Irish-Keltic culture, have been put in a position to acquaint himself with the ancient Sibylline literature." Why this "evidently," or this "must"? Are there any direct evidences that the early Irish cultivated Sibylline literature to any extent whatever? No one will deny that Ireland was in the VII-Xth century a centre of religious and literary activity, that the Northmen were in the closest contact with Irish in Ireland proper and in the Western Isles, and borrowed from them not a few proper names and names of every-day objects. This thread of Irish nomenclature is so unmistakable in certain of the Eddaic poems that Vigfusson has been led to the belief "that these poems, with one or two exceptions, owe their origin to Norse poets in the Western Islands." It is somewhat significant that Vigfusson, although specifying some of them and their Irish peculiarities, does not mention the Voluspá. But is there anything in the Voluspá, or in the Sibylline books, that associates them unmistakably with Ireland? A glance at Vogt's *Essay on the Sibylline Prophecies*, Paul u. Braune, *Beiträge*, IV. 79 sqq., will teach us that the subject was widely known throughout the Middle Ages, early and late, and that its dissemination was due to the writings of such popular ecclesiastics as Augustine, Lactantius, Isidore, and Bede (or some unknown author believed at the time to be Bede). Are we at liberty, then, to infer, as Bang has done, that the author of the Voluspá, whoever he may have been, was indebted to Irish monks for his knowledge of the subject? The inference is not a logical one, and there is not a scrap of historical or linguistic evidence in its favor. It is as unsubstantiated as Vigfusson's conjecture, *Prolegomena* clxxxvii, respecting the *Sólarljóð*, namely, that it reminds us of "the sweetness and meekness of the Columbian Church." Our knowledge of the church of St. Columba<sup>1</sup> is not much clearer than our know-

<sup>1</sup> Is the Anglian name *Columba* in fact, as usually stated, the Latin for "dove," or is it a mere thickening of the Irish *colum*?

ledge of the church of St. Patrick. What the popular Irish conception of St. Colum Cillé was in those days, we may learn from the following Irish story, the composition of which is probably to be assigned to a time not very remote from the date of the *Sólar-ljóð*. The story runs thus: About the year 590 a great meeting was called in Ulster to settle certain points in dispute between Ireland and Scotland. King Aedh presided. The Scottish king brought with him to the conference St. Colum Cillé, to give advice. But King Aedh resented the saint's intrusion and gave orders to treat him with disrespect. Conall, the king's elder son, carries out the orders with gusto; but Domhnall, the younger, treats the saint with great kindness. The saint punishes Conall by prophesying for him a wandering and crazy life, and rewards Domhnall with the promise that he shall succeed to the throne. As soon as the mother hears of the malediction bestowed upon her favorite son, she sends her maid to the king to tell him that St. Colum Cillé must not receive the least token of respect from him. Thereupon the saint "prayed that the queen and her attendant should remain in the form of two cranes on the brink of the ford below forever," and the prayer was immediately granted (see O'Curry on *The Exile of the Children of Uisnech*, *Atlantis*, 1860, p. 393). Whatever the Anglo-Latin stories of St. Patrick and St. Colum Cillé may relate, the Irish stories at least do not suggest times of "sweetness and meekness."<sup>1</sup>

In endeavoring to trace relationships, we should, when external evidence is wanting, accept only such internal evidence as is unmistakable. One example of specifically Irish usages occurs in the *Leabhar Breac*. The MS. was written in the XIVth century, according to O'Curry; but the contents are of high antiquity. They are chiefly tracts on ecclesiastical subjects. Among others is a commentary on the canon of the mass, in which the commentator evidently presupposes a commingling of the elements in the

<sup>1</sup>In his *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 17, O'Curry mentions another incident like the above. One of the oldest ecclesiastical writings in Irish is the *Féiliré*, or *Metrical Festology of Aengus Celé Dé* (the "Culdee"). The author (or scribe) has appended to the text a note to this effect: "St. Colum Cillé having paid a visit to St. Longarad of Ossory, requested permission to examine his books, but Longarad having refused, Colum then prayed that his friend should not profit by his refusal, whereupon the books became illegible immediately after his death." May we supply a moral by guessing that these books (manuscripts) were of an ante-Christian, pagan nature?

chalice by pouring the wine upon the water. This is reversing the usual process, and the monkish symbolic interpretation put upon it is that the blood of Christ, the higher and more precious element, came down from above to the lower and grosser element of man and the world. Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities (*sub* "Elements") mentions no instance of pouring the wine on the water. A marked peculiarity of this sort would be strong evidence. But the Sibylline prophecies are too vague, too universal, to be fixed upon any one church of the IXth or Xth century.

In his Icelandic Dictionary, p. 780, Vigfusson has given a list of forty-nine words, names and nicknames, of Keltic (Irish) origin occurring in the Landnama-Bók. Whitley Stokes, in the *Revue Celtique*, III. 186-191, has succeeded in identifying the Irish forms of all but a very few. The most important result of Mr. Stokes's examination is the light it throws on certain points in Middle-Irish pronunciation. Inasmuch as the Germanic colonists of Iceland knew nothing of conventional-historic Irish spelling, we may be sure that the forms of the Landnama-Bók represent the sounds of foreign words to an Icelandic ear. Thus the Icelandic name Kaðall, standing for Irish Cathall, shows that at that time (XIIth or XIth century) the Irish *th*, which is in modern Irish a mere breathing = *h*, must have sounded like *ð* or *p* in Anglo-Saxon. Similarly, the Melkorka of Landnama-Bók = Irish Mael-Curcaigh, "servant of Curcach," shows that Middle-Irish *gh* was silent in *auslaut*, as it is to-day. This last inference is an argument, it seems to me, against accepting Vigfusson's interpretation (see Prolegomena clxxxxvi) of the title "Rigs-þula" (Rigs-mál). Vigfusson considers the *Rig-* to be the Gaelic (Irish) *righ*, king. But if the Irish *gh* was silent at the time when the Landnama-Bók was written, it must also have been silent when the Rigs-þula was written; for certainly no one can look upon the Rigs-þula as very old. And if the Irish themselves did not sound final *gh*, why should a Scandinavian poet, or scribe, writing by ear, introduce a *g*?

Another field of investigation which is rapidly becoming prominent is the international relationship, so to speak, of metres. Within the last three years two attempts have been made to establish a direct connection between Irish forms of verse and those of non-Keltic races. Namely, by Edzardi, in his essay entitled "Die skaldischen Versmasse und ihr Verhältnis zur keltischen (irischen) Verskunst," in Paul u. Braune, Beiträge, etc., V. 570 sqq.; and by Bartsch, "Ein keltisches Versmass im Provenzalischen u. Französö-

sischen," in *Zts. für romanische Philologie*, II. 195 sqq. Both essays are unsatisfactory, for one reason at least, if for no other; their authors cannot lay claim to exact and original scholarship in Keltic philology. The services rendered by Bartsch to the study of Romance and Germanic literature are too well known to call even for mention; Edzardi is among the most promising students of Norse. But their knowledge of Irish literature is evidently got at second hand, if not at third hand, and, for such comparisons as they have in view, is wholly inadequate. Were the subject of Old-Irish metres one that had been treated exhaustively by competent scholars, and reduced to such a system that those not initiated in Keltic philology might grasp at least the cardinal points by reading carefully a few universally approved treatises, it would be possible and profitable for Bartsch, Edzardi and others like them to institute comparisons between Irish and Norse or Romance. But this is far from being the case; so far, indeed, that a perfectly candid searcher after the truth must say to himself again and again: of primitive Irish metres we know nothing, and as to Old and Middle-Irish verse-forms, the best of our knowledge is still to come.

The admission may sound, perhaps, too sweeping. Let me corroborate it, then, by the statements of Keltists high in repute. Bartsch's attempt at argument was, on the face of it, weak and haphazard; it was disposed of summarily by Jubainville, in the *Romania*, April, 1879. Bartsch fancied that he detected marked resemblances between Late-Latin and early Romance metres and Irish of the same age. As it is not at all probable that Continental verse-makers would borrow directly from Ireland, the inference, according to Bartsch, was that the two systems had a common origin, or that the Keltic system passed into the Roman in consequence of the colonization of Gaul. To this Jubainville replied, in substance if not in words, that Bartsch evidently knew nothing about the fundamental principles of Keltic philology.

In order to make Jubainville's strictures perfectly clear, I shall have to recapitulate the main points very briefly. Our knowledge of Irish in its earliest forms is derived chiefly from glosses written by Irish monks in Latin manuscripts. Occasionally we get in these glosses a passage long enough to afford a continuous text; but usually the glosses consist of detached words and phrases, used merely to explain the Latin text that they accompany. The Irish of the glosses, called specifically Old-Irish, dates from the eighth and ninth centuries. Possibly some of it may be dated as early as the

seventh century. It is upon this glossae-Irish that the great Grammatica Celtica of Zeuss (revised by Ebel) is for the most part based. Middle-Irish is the designation of the language at a later stage, say from the beginning of the twelfth century. The most celebrated Irish manuscript of this period, i. e. written entire in Irish, is the *Leabhar na huidre*, or Book of the Dun Cow, written about 1100. It is a collection of stories, some of which have been edited and translated separately. The entire MS. has been published in facsimile by the Royal Irish Academy. See Windisch, *Kurzgefasste Irische Grammatik*, Leipzig, 1879, p. 6.

But Irish of the eighth or even of the seventh century cannot be called very old. In fact, one of the constant regrets among Keltic philologists is that they have no Keltic remains, whether in Irish, Gaulish or Welsh, that can do for their study what the fragments of Wulfila's Gothic translation of the Bible have done for Germanic philology. Zeuss, Ebel and their successors have wrought wonders with the materials at their disposal. They have profited, of course, by the results of general Indo-Germanic philology. But there is not one of them, I am confident, but would consider his study placed upon an infinitely more satisfactory basis could he only succeed in unearthing an Irish text of ten or twenty pages of the third or fourth century. The difference is not one of age alone; it is one of character. Old-Irish has "sloughed off" many termination-syllables, especially in the declension of nouns and adjectives. Some of them we can restore approximately, by conjecture, but only approximately. What we need is a genuine Irish text giving these terminations in such an unmistakable form that we can readily explain by their aid all the curious phenomena of aspiration, eclipsis and infection. Nevertheless we know, by inference, that the terminations must have survived down to a time not much anterior to the glossae. This early stage of the language has been called "pre-historic"; perhaps a better term would be "preliterary." According to Jubainville, prehistoric Irish was still in vogue even in the seventh century. In Old-Irish, the genitive singular of the word "son" has become *maic*. This presupposes a prehistoric *maqi*, of which the *-i* has been absorbed into and assimilated with the stem. As a matter of fact we do find the form *maqi* in Irish inscriptions. See Romania, p. 145. Compare also the Gaulish names *Segomari*, *Druticni*, *Dannotali*, Whitley Stokes, Three Irish Glossaries, p. lv, note §. If such inflexional syllables, then, subsisted as late as the sixth and seventh centuries, no Irish or Gaulish verse in the days of the

Republic or early Empire can be imagined without them. To quote Jubainville's words: "As late as the year 700 Irish still retained its external (=terminal) inflexions. Hence not one of the Irish verses that we possess can be anterior to this date, for it is clear that if we were to restore the external inflexions (terminations), most of the verses could no longer stand on their feet."

The argument, it will be observed, not only overthrows Bartsch's fancied analogies, but it lays down a doctrine which cannot be apprehended too clearly. Primitive Irish verse must have been made up of words retaining certain terminal syllables of inflexion. We do not possess any such verse, consequently we must first find some before constructing our theory.

Edzardi's position is quite different from Bartsch's; he attempts merely to show that some of the metres used by the Skalds are reproductions of well-known Irish forms of verse. There is nothing impossible, or even improbable, in such a hypothesis. The Northmen were for centuries in contact with the Irish, and may well have borrowed from them in more ways than one. But Edzardi's way of going to work is not likely to give satisfaction; it reads very much as if the author, at home in one domain, had strayed off into another, and, bent on finding resemblances, had picked them up by chance. Thus, I doubt if any critical student of Irish metres would at the present day consult O'Donovan's grammar for specimens of early versification. O'Donovan's work was published in 1845, before even the first edition of Zeuss. Not only is it far behind the demands of the age, but its author never intended it for more than a treatise on modern Irish. His remarks upon Old Irish are only incidental to a practical treatment of the living tongue. The few examples of so-called early verse that he gives are taken from writers of the fourteenth century, and later. Edzardi, it is true, cites some Old and Middle Irish verses, communicated to him, he states, by Windisch. But is not this a mere loan *ad hoc*? Were Edzardi as much at home in Irish as he unquestionably is in Icelandic, he would not need to borrow from Windisch's still unpublished volume of "Texts." Numerous publications by Whitley Stokes, O'Curry, Crowe, Hennessy and other scholars would have yielded him all the materials he could possibly utilize. May I venture upon a blunt question without giving offence? Namely, what is the good of comparisons instituted by scholars who are not equally familiar with both objects to be compared?

The study of Old and Middle Irish is a formidable undertaking.



The forms of the language are complicated, the idiomatic structure is uncommonly puzzling. Dictionaries, accurate literary and political histories, almost all helps are wanting. The student must fight his way through by sheer force of will, inch by inch. It is the last field for guess-work. No one can "skim" Old Irish as many of us "skim" French or Italian. As to the verse-structure, in particular, the honestest course for us will be to admit promptly that until all the Irish verse-texts are edited, it will not be possible to construct a system. And the *most important* text of all is still buried in manuscript, namely, the treatise on metres contained in the Book of Ballymote.

O'Donovan, at p. 427 of his grammar, says: "There is a curious tract on Irish versification in the Book of Ballymote, which deserves to be studied." From O'Donovan's point of view it was perhaps sufficient to refer to this tract as "curious"; but modern scholars will assuredly deem it something more. Thus Crowe, in his annotated edition and translation of the *Siabur-Charpat Con Culaind* (*Demoniac Chariot of Cu Chulaind*), in the *Kilkenny Journal*, Jan. 1871, says, p. 409, "All the requisites for the perfect composition of every species of poetry are laid down in the treatise . . . in the Book of Ballymote . . . I may have the opportunity of printing the Ballymote tract before long." Unfortunately Crowe did not live to carry out his purpose. Mr. Hennessy, in informing me that he had a copy of the tract, made by himself, added, "It is *very* hard." I am quite willing to take his word for it. Professor Zimmer has also a copy, I believe. Both gentlemen agree in the high estimate to be put upon the tract. The manuscript of the Book of Ballymote is not especially old; O'Curry assigns it to the latter part of the fourteenth century. But, like so many other Irish manuscripts, it is an immense compilation ("502 pp. of the largest folio vellum") from much earlier sources. Among other things it contains the Irish Book of Nennius, ed. in 1848 by Todd and Herbert for the Archaeological Society. The chief value of the tract on versification will doubtless be found to consist in its numerous specimens of the earliest forms of verse taken from manuscripts no longer in existence. Certainly Crowe, who was up to the time of his death in the foremost rank of Irish scholarship, would not have expressed himself so unreservedly, had he not been convinced of the importance of this tract.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Are Continental scholars as well acquainted as they should be with Crowe's articles in the *Kilkenny Journal* and O'Curry's in the *Atlantis*? I fear they are not. Otherwise Professor Windisch would have escaped the misstatement

The indispensableness of a thorough knowledge of Old-Irish versification is illustrated by Crowe in another paper, *The Guardsman's Cry of St. Patric, Kilkenny, April, 1869*, p. 290. Here he shows how O'Curry, for want of such knowledge, printed as prose a passage in the *Sick Bed of Cu Chulaind* which is in verse (see *Atlantis*, p. 388). Also that Whitley Stokes, in his *Goidelica*, misread and misinterpreted several lines of the Hymn of St. Brocan, *Liber Hymnorum*.

Crowe's remarks upon the distinction between poet (*fili*) and bard are significant enough to warrant quotation. He says, p. 287: "There are in Irish two kinds of poetry—the one metrical, the other not. The latter species was the composition of the *fili*, never of the bard, who always sang in metre and in rhyme . . . The *fili*, although originally the only poet, and a poet only, grew at length, in direct antithesis to the fate of the Greek *χωμικός*, to be the poet *par excellence*, the teacher of philosophy, philology, rhetoric . . . All those mysterious compositions supposed to produce supernatural effects, such as incantations, satires, cries of poesy (of the last-named class is our *Guardsman's Cry*), were the works of the *fili*, while at the same time his undergraduate course included all the metrical rules of the bard. Thus we see that the *fili* and the bard were quite distinct, yet all our modern scholars have mixed them up together under the general name of bards. We read, for example, everywhere that at the synod of Druimm Cetta, St. Columba succeeded in retaining the bards in Ireland. But at this synod there was no question whatever about the bards; it was the *filis* and their disciples that created the disturbance at the time. The bards never taught, had no disciples—being, in fact, a modern and non-associate institution, and represented as such in our manuscripts . . . The *fili*, on the other hand, may be traced back to the remotest period, and indeed his title claims this antiquity, at least if the following idea as to the origin of the name can have any value. In Zeuss 274, *las na fileda* is glossed *apud comicos*, which would seem to be an exact translation. As from the Greek stem *χωμ-* we have *χώμη*, village; *χώμος*, village revel; *χωμικός*, village poet; so from the Irish stem *fel* we have *fel* or *fele*, an inclosure; *fled* (written in full *filed* in the *Lebor na huidre*), a village feast; and *fili*, a village poet."

(p. 115 of his *Kurzgefasste Irische Grammatik*) that his third text, p. 118, *Ectra Condla Chaim*, etc., had never before appeared in print. The entire passage, i. e. Irish text, with introduction, translation and notes, was published by Crowe in the *Kilkenny Journal*, April, 1874, under the title "Adventures of Condla Ruad."

The author has not defined this "non-metrical" poetry of the *filis*, beyond saying that it "has various forms. In some cases it consists of a certain number of *bricht* (eight-syllable combinations) in one or more divisions." But he goes on to say, p. 289, "for the making of an Irish poem, metrical or not, there are, as regards expression, certain laws, the three principal of which are defined as follows in the ancient preface to the *Lebor na huidre* copy of the *Amra*," namely, "return," "re-narration" and "reduplication." The "return" is "the doubling of one word in one place in the round and without following it from that out." Example: *Dia, Dia, dorrogus*, God, God, I beseech him. Another example, in a metrical composition, is this quatrain from the Book of Ballymote tract:

O splendid boy, sing Brian's poem,  
Sing Brian's poem, O splendid boy;  
Brian of the Kine's plain, palm of Fal's men,  
Palm of Fal's men, Brian of the Kine's plain.

"Re-narration is re-narrating from a like mode, i. e. the one word, to say it frequently in the round with the intervention of other words between them." Example, the repetition of *niurt*, "power," at the beginning of each line in one passage in the Guardsman's Cry:

1. May there come to me to-day the "power" (*niurt*), the strong title Trinity, etc.

2. May there come to me to-day the "power" of Christ's birth, etc.

3. May there come to me to-day the "power" of seraphim's orders, etc.

An example of "re-narration" in metre is contained in a quatrain of the Siabur Charpat Con Culaind:

I was not a hound of round-lapping of leavings,  
I was a hound of slaying of troops;  
I was not a hound of watching of calves,  
I was a hound of watching of Emain.

The first and third lines begin with *nipsa* (= *ni basa*), "I was not," the second and fourth with *basa*, "I was." "Reduplication is refolding, that is, bi-geminating." Example: *Agur, agur, iar cein chein*, I fear, I fear, after long long.

These three processes, then, return, re-narration, re-duplication, underlie *all* Irish poetry, according to Crowe. Do they not produce upon the ear and the imagination an impression akin to that

created by the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, or by the amplifications and repetitions of Anglo-Saxon alliteration? "O splendid boy, sing Brian's poem," etc., recalls to me immediately the celebrated lament of David over Absalom. When the composer of the *Beowulf*-poem sings, vv. 1647-1649;

ðá wæs be feaxe      on flett boren  
Grendles heáfod,      ðær guman druncon,  
egeslic for eorlum,      and ðære idese mid,

we of to-day have to construe each half line with the one that stands under it and not with the one by its side, and we read: Then was by the hair Grendel's head, terrible to the knights, brought into the hall where the men were drinking, and their wives with them. The difference between the Anglo-Saxon return and the Irish is no less evident than the resemblance; the *fili* states a thought fully and then re-states it; the *scóip* states his thought half and comes back to finish it. Both methods are in strictness rhetorical rather than poetical, and each is the counterpart of the other.

How far Crowe's views may have been accepted among Keltists, and how far their adoption would facilitate the study of Old-Irish versification, are points upon which I can scarcely venture to have an "opinion." There is one "suspicion," however, that continually thrusts itself upon me, to wit, that we shall not be able to study the genesis of the Irish system until we have forms more primitive than any we now have. One of the oldest specimens is contained in the lines scribbled on the margin of the St. Gall manuscript of Priscian. The first *rann* (quatrain) runs thus:

Is acher in gáith innocht  
Fufuasna fairggae findfolt  
Ní ágor reimm mora minn  
Dond laechraid lainn oa Lochlind.

Is sharp (violent) the wind the (= this) night  
Agitates the ocean white hair (foam?)  
Not fear I (a) crossing of the sea clear  
By the warrior-troop fierce from Scandinavia.

The translation is from Jubainville's French, but modified here and there in accordance with Windisch's glossary. The verse-flow may be marked thus:

is acher in gáith innócht, etc.

Lines 1 and 2 are regarded as riming (= assonant), *-nocht: folt*; also lines 3 and 4, *minn: -lind*. Even more evident to a Germanist

are the alliterations *is, in, in; fu-, fair-, find; mora, minn; laech-, lainn, -lind*.

Is verse of this kind primitive? It sounds to me too complicated. Rime (i. e. terminal rime) is quite sufficient to give character to verse; alliteration is also of itself sufficient. But the two together stand in each other's way, and have a ring of artificiality, especially when the number of syllables must be counted with scrupulous exactness. The above quatrain, e. g., has exactly twenty-eight. If the earliest Irish *filis* were indeed, as Crowe defines them, "village" poets, they must have sung in measures more rustic than any edited by Crowe himself, by Stokes, or by Zeuss. And by "rustic" I do not mean *bänkelsängerisch*. The quatrain cited has, to my ear at least, a decided ballad-jingle, which is the token of decadence and mannerism: It is no better and no worse than scores of medieval monkish songs in Latin. I use the word "rustic" as Crowe has used the word *χωμικός*, a poet of the people reciting to the people in a strain with which all are equally conversant. Rustic = *volksmässig*. Our Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse is the best vehicle of truly popular poetry. Even had Bede failed to transmit to us the charming little story of Caedmon, we might conjecture from internal evidence that alliteration was something in which all could have a share. It is perfectly simple, dignified, powerful and flexible; it expresses evidently all that the Old-German mind was capable of conceiving. If we weed out the palpable monkish interpolations and blunderings from our *Beowulf*-poem, we shall have left one of the most vigorous and straightforward of poems in any language, ancient or modern. We can readily picture to ourselves the followers of a king of Old England reciting long passages of it from the mead-bench around the winter fireside.

The essence of Old-German poetry is its alliteration. Whether we hold by the old four-beat (*Vierhebungen*) theory or reject it in favor of the two-beat, we cannot but admit that "no alliteration, no verse."<sup>1</sup> May not a like disposition have prevailed in the earliest Irish verse? Nothing could be farther from my purpose than to hint, however vaguely, at the possibility of German and Irish verse having a common origin. I take the liberty merely of suggesting a change in the method of approaching—what the French would call

<sup>1</sup> So strong was this taste for alliteration that it affected, we may say vitiated, Old-English prose, or what should have been prose. Compare ten Brink, *Gesch.* p. 140, with Grein's ed. of Aelfric's *Judges*, first in *Bibl. d. An. S. Prosa*, p. 253, then in *Anglia* II. 142.

*envisager*—Irish verse. Hitherto scholars have busied themselves almost exclusively with examining into the laws or usages of rime (assonance), syllable-counting and line-arrangement in Irish. Might they not, possibly with more profit, study the principles underlying Irish alliteration? If the result should be to establish the priority of alliteration over rime, we could then assert of Irish what is unquestionably true of Old-German and Old-English, that rime has *supplanted* alliteration.

Attempts like that of Bartsch to explain the development of medieval Latin forms of verse by assuming the intrusion of Irish methods into Latin, seem to me to be putting the cart before the horse. We cannot yet say that we are fully enlightened on all points in the growth of medieval Latin verse. Although much has been done in the way of editing, more remains to be done in the way of systematizing. But are not the general facts sufficiently clear, namely, that medieval riming Latin grew out of the church service, which required for its chants, antiphonies, sequences, etc., a flow of strongly marked accents at regular intervals, with strongly marked pauses? Given on the one hand a musical notation, on the other hand a language like Latin abounding in long words and terminations that lend themselves spontaneously to rime, what need can there be of going outside of Latin to Keltic in quest of a source for rime? The conjecture that a few Irish monks scattered here and there in Franco-Gallia and Lombard-Italy could have played a determining part in shaping the liturgy of so cosmopolitan an institution as the Western Church, is too hazardous to be accepted without the most conclusive proof. We know that Latin metres or their lineal descendants, Old French and Provençal, were strong enough to supplant permanently the alliterative system of the Germans and Anglo-Saxons. It is not a mere "chance" of history that the measure of the *Heliand* should have passed away, whereas the far clumsier verses of Otfrid's *Christ* should have determined the forms of all subsequent German poetry. Is our knowledge of the early Irish, then, of a kind to warrant us in claiming for them a profounder genius and a tougher vitality? The study of Keltic literature and mythology is but in its beginnings; it offers to its followers a field of the most original investigation. But its friends will do it harm, not good, by claiming for it too much honor. In the absence of unmistakable proof, we shall be safe in assuming that of the two worlds, the Roman and the Keltic, the former was the giver, the latter the receiver.

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